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AFTER CONFUSION, NPCI SAYS 1.1% FEE ONLY FOR SOME TRANSACTIONS

The new interchange charges are applicable only for UPI merchant transactions above ₹2,000 using prepaid payment instruments (PPI)

NO CHARGES FOR NORMAL UPI TRANSACTIONS

There will be no fee for customers who use bank account-based UPI, the National Payments Corporation of India clarified after its recent circular on 1.1% fees on certain UPI transactions created confusion. NPCI recently permitted PPI wallets such as Paytm to be part of interoperable UPI ecosystem and allowed them to charge 1.1% fee from merchants | P13

WILL NOT AFFECT 99.9% UPI USERS

- According to the NPCI, the interchange fee will not affect 99.9% of UPI transactions, because they are linked to bank accounts. In other words, if you are sending money to friends or family, it won't attract 1.1% fee
- "These bank account-to-account transactions continue to remain free for customers and merchants," NPCI clarified on Wednesday

April 1, 2023

WHEN THE 1.1% INTERCHANGE CHARGES FOR PPI WALLET TRANSACTIONS KICK IN

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KARNATAKA TO VOTE ON MAY 10

Single-phase poll to 224-member Assembly; notification to be issued on April 13

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

KARNATAKA will go to polls in a single phase on May 10 for its 224-member Legislative Assembly with 5.24 crore people eligible to vote in 58,282 polling stations.

Counting of votes will be done on May 13. Announcing the poll schedule for Karnataka, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Wednesday said the ECI is determined to ensure free and fair elections, giving no scope for use of money power and other unfair electoral means. It has deployed 2,400 static surveillance teams for the purpose. It has set up 17 inter-state check-posts in 19 districts which share borders with other states.

"The Commission is working towards mapping the expenditure-sensitive constituencies," Kumar said.

He said the election notification will be issued on April 13. The last date for filing nomination papers is April 20. The papers will be scrutinised on April 21. The last date for withdrawal of nomination papers is April 24.

On choosing Wednesday for polling, Kumar said it has been done to encourage greater participation of voters. With the announcement of the poll date, the Model Code of Conduct has come into force in the state, where the BJP, Congress and JDS have intensified their campaigns. But, citing the ECI's seriousness to ensure fair and peaceful polls, he said even before the enforcement of MCC, a strict vigil was maintained by enforcement agencies on the Commission's direction, leading to the seizure of cash and goods worth Rs 80 crore so far. P4

KARNATAKA ELECTIONS 2023 DECIDE

FAST FACTS

Date of polling	Counting of votes
MAY 10	MAY 13

224 ASSEMBLY STRENGTH

5.24 Cr Voters on poll rolls in Karnataka

9.58 lakh Of them are 18+ who would exercise their franchise for the first time

12.15 lakh Voters aged 80+ will get to exercise their franchise from home for the first time

No clear winner as yet; it could be anybody's game

RAMU PATIL @ Bengaluru

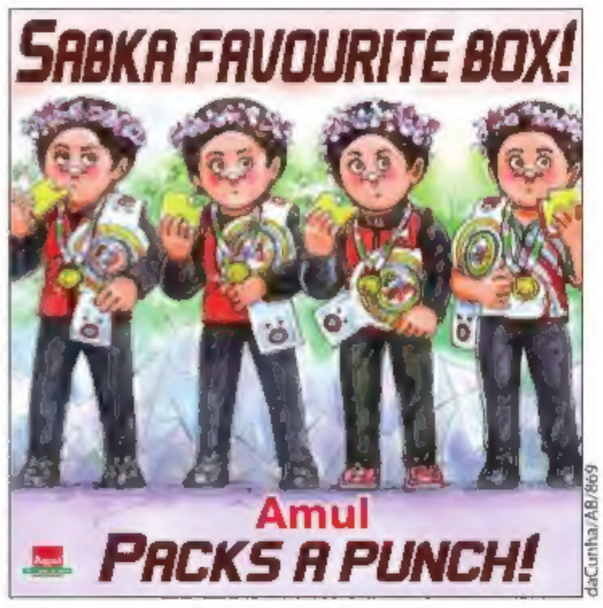
AS Karnataka goes to polls on May 10, campaigning is set to pick up pace. As things stand today, no party looks to be the clear winner, and the contest is likely to go down to the wire. However, the equations may change as we get closer to the polls.

For now, Karnataka seems to be staring at a fractured mandate and the state agencies' reading of the current situation also indicates the same. Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his recent speech in Davanagere too cautioned against a fractured verdict. There has to be some reason why the PM mentioned it.

On the ground, the Opposition Congress which is making all-out efforts to take advantage of the anti-incumbency factor seems to have a slight edge. The BJP's well-oiled election machinery is trying hard to bridge that gap and return to power on its own. The Janata Dal Secular seems to be holding on to its base in the Old Mysuru region and its performance will have a direct bearing on the Congress' show and overall results of the 2023 polls to be announced on May 13.

Around a year ago, it looked as though Congress was clearly ahead of the others and the BJP did not look confident. There were several questions about how the party will face the polls without having its Lingayat strongman BS Yediyurappa at the helm. But, the BJP quickly re-calibrated its strategy and brought the former CM into the game by accommodating him in the party's Parliamentary Board. He is now leading the charge along with Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai. The PM and Union Home Minister Amit Shah's frequent visits have also helped the party push its development agenda and aggressively counter Congress' efforts to set the narrative around corruption. BJP is depending on Modi's popularity to overcome anti-incumbency.

The Congress will make corruption one of its major poll planks apart from freebies and welfare programmes it announced as Congress Guarantees. P4



SC slams states for being 'impotent' on hate speech

SHRUTI KAKKAR @ New Delhi

TERMING hate speech as a vicious circle, the Supreme Court on Wednesday reprimanded states for failing to curb it. "This is going on because state is impotent, powerless and doesn't act in time. Why do we have the state at all if it is silent?" Justice K M Joseph wondered.

The judge said, "This hate thing is a vicious circle. The moment politics and religion are separated and politicians stop using religion in politics, hate speeches will go away... Some sort of mechanism needs to be developed by the state so that we can curb this kind of statements."

Taking strong exception to fringe elements making hate speeches, Justice B V Nagarathna, during the hearing said, "The idea of fraternity was so much there earlier but now I'm sorry to say the cracks are coming. There must be restraint on every citizen." She suggested that citizens could take a pledge not to vilify other members of the society.

"We had orators like Nehru, Vajpayee. People from rural areas used to come to listen to them. Now fringe elements from all sides are making these statements. Are we now going to take contempt of court action against all Indians?" she asked. The hearing witnessed exchange of sharp remarks between Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and Justice Joseph with Mehta asking the judge to not only single out hate speeches in Maharashtra but also look at instances in states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu. He cited a DMK leader's rant against Brahmins in Tamil Nadu and a hate speech by a child at a rally in Kerala, adding, "Let us not be selective."

EXPRESS READ

Faizal gets back LS membership

New Delhi: NCP leader from Lakshadweep, Mohammad Faizal P P, was back in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, as his disqualification as Member of Parliament from the Lower House was revoked after over 10 weeks and hours ahead of the hearing in the Supreme Court on his petition in the matter. P5

Cong to appeal against Rahul's conviction

New Delhi: The Congress expressed solidarity with former Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday, and accused the Centre of acting in haste to disqualify him from the Lok Sabha after his conviction in a 2019 defamation case. Sources said a petition challenging Gandhi's conviction is ready.

Deal to ramp up Russia oil imports

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

INDIA's oil imports from Russia, which jumped 11 times in 2022-23 amid worsening geopolitical tensions, are set to hit record highs with Indian Oil Corporation inking a pact with Russia's largest oil producer Rosneft to 'substantially' ramp up oil supplies. Russia will also diversify the grades of crude oil it supplies to India.

The deal assumes significance as it comes at a time when India is increasingly facing diplomatic pressure by Western countries to curtail imports of 'cheaper crude' from Russia.

India, the third largest oil importer in the world, has been ignoring such calls citing its domestic energy needs and has increased Russian oil imports considerably in the past year.

On Wednesday, Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin and IOC chairman Shrikant Madhav Vaidya signed the agreement in the presence of Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep S Puri.

TOP CRUDE OIL SUPPLIERS TO INDIA IN FY2022-23

Countries	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 (Apr-Jan)
Iraq	12,873	26,381	28,694
Saudi	10,753	19,706	24,793
Russia	944	2,256	24,700
UAE	7,361	10,701	14,285
USA	5,373	9,541	9,380

All figures in $ million

The agreement, however, did not indicate volumes. The two companies also discussed ways of expanding cooperation between Rosneft and Indian companies in the entire value chain of the energy sector, including possibilities of making payments in national currencies.

According to energy cargo tracker Vortexa, India imported 35% of its total crude from Russia in February 2023, which is 1.62 million barrels per day. India's other top four traditional oil suppliers are Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE and the US (see chart).

According to the commerce ministry, Russia has for the first time become one of the five largest trading partners of India, thanks to ballooning crude oil imports. The volume of trade between the countries in 2022 reached $38.4 billion.

"Thus, the goal set by the leaders of our countries to increase turnover to $30 billion by 2025 has been achieved in advance," said the head of Rosneft.

Indian companies ONGC Videsh Ltd, Oil India Limited, Indian Oil Corporation and Bharat PetroResources have been owners of 49.9% of Rosneft's subsidiary JSC Vankorneft since 2016.

WOMAN POWER

Ballari gets state's youngest mayor

KIRAN BALANNANAVAR @ Ballari

TWENTY-THREE-YEAR-OLD **Triveni D** was elected Mayor of Ballari on Wednesday. She is the youngest mayor to be elected in the history of mayoral polls in Karnataka.

Triveni, who is a Congress councilor, represents Ward 4 in Ballari City Municipal Corporation. B Janaki, also a Congress councillor from Ward 33, was elected unopposed as her deputy. Triveni, a paramedical graduate, is also the youngest elected member of the corporation.

She is the daughter of former mayor Savita Bhaye. The mayoral posts were reserved for the Scheduled Caste (SC). Triveni got 44 votes while her opponent from BJP polled 13 votes. The BJP did not field its candidate for the deputy mayor's post.

Triveni told *The New Indian Express* that it was a proud moment for her and thanked her party for supporting her. "I want to work with all councillors and thank those who voted for me. Together, we can develop Ballari as a model city," she said.

SSLC

8.42L STUDENTS TO TAKE EXAM ON FRIDAY

According to the KSEAB, 15,498 schools have registered for the examination across the state | P2

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DIDI DOUBLES DOWN

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool supremo Mamata Banerjee speaks during a sit-in demonstration near the Ambedkar statue at Red Road in Kolkata on Wednesday, against the Centre's alleged discriminatory attitude against the state | PTI|P10

IN SPIRITUAL PURSUIT

8-year-old US-born Rinpoche coming to India for monastic studies?

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

THE eight-year-old US-born Mongolian boy, who was anointed the 10th Khalkha Jetsun Dhampa Rinpoche by the Dalai Lama in an initiation ceremony at Dharamshala on March 8, "may come to India for monastic studies," informed sources told *TNIE*.

"Following his initiation, the Tulku (reincarnate boy) is now the head of the Jonang tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and the Buddhist spiritual head of Mongolia. There is a possibility of him coming to India for spiritual studies because of the lineage and better monastic facilities. The ninth Khalkha Jetsun Dhampa was affiliated to the Jonang Takten Phuntsok Choeling Buddhist Monastery in Shimla. Some of the monks in Jonang monastery also study at Drepung Monastery in Mundgod in Karnataka. It is possible that the Tulku takes up his monastic studies at these centres," sources added on condition of anonymity.

Dhampa Rinpoche who was anointed the 10th Khalkha Jetsun by the Dalai Lama

According to unofficial reports, the Tulku, who was born in the US in 2015, was anointed as the 10th Khalkha (largest district of Mongolia) Jetsun Dhampa (Lord of Refuge) in a ceremony at Mongolia's biggest Gandantegchinlen Monastery in February. The ceremony was attended by the Abbot of the monastery and the high Lamas of Mongolia. P9